

The challenge for writing a big work for an instrument like the violin is partly due to the amazing baggage that comes with the instrument. Like the guitar, the violin holds an important position across genres and cultures. *Native Informant* is a five-movement response to a commission from Rachel Barton Pine.

The first movement, *Lyric Sketch*, is an art song with secret lyrics. It begins with the violin playing an imitation of a piano intro and then the entrance of the “voice.” The “song” is complete with a vocal-like high note and ends with a short outro. *Rounds*, the second movement, is a vigorous Arabic round dance. This fast and flashy movement brings Arabic fiddling into the picture (the violin has a long history in Arabic folk-music). It is music of abandon.

The third movement, *For Egypt*, begins with a descent from the heights of the violin’s range right down to the bottom. It is a lamentation of both intimate sadness and outright grief at the loss of civilian life in the 2011-12 Egyptian Revolution. The fourth movement is, by contrast, just plain fun. This *Scherzo* captures the retro spirit of New York’s cabaret music that is so dear to me. Although there are no explicit musical quotes in the movement, overtones of Porter, Gershwin and Blitzstein dominate much of the movement. Its cuteness offsets the tragedy of the third movement and prepares for the rebirth signified by the last movement. The finale, *Lullaby of the Ex Soldat*, is a tribute to the immense history contained within Rachel’s instrument. I was aware, while writing this piece, that I was writing for an instrument that jammed with Brahms and had a long history before that. We also discovered that while I was working on the *Sonata*, Rachel became pregnant. So the last movement is dedicated to her daughter Sylvia Michelle Pine, in celebration of birth and renewal.

—Mohammed Fairouz

Commissioned by RBP Music LLC for Rachel Barton Pine

Native Informant is recorded on “Native Informant,” Naxos American Classics
CD 8.559744, performed by Rachel Barton Pine.

Duration: 25:00

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